NO
PAPER
RIGHTS

REIMPRESSION
INTERDITE

HOW TO STUDY YOUR OWN COMMUNITY

Research from the Perspective of Women

HELGA E. JACOBSON Ph.D.

WOMEN'S RESEARCH CENTRE

Vancouver, B.C.

1977

WOMEN'S RESEARCH CENTRE
#101-2245 West Broadway
Vancouver, B.C. V6K 2E4
(604) 734-0485

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper grew out of work done by women from Kitimat, Fraser Lake and Mackenzie, who have indeed studied their own communities. I learned a great deal from the process. I would like to thank Diana Ellis and Gene Errington for their help and encouragement which they always gave when it was needed, and Dorothy Smith, who provided the necessary impetus for me to find a direction in my work. To Jane Wintemute, my companion and critic, my grateful appreciation for her thoughtful comments throughout the various stages in which this paper manifested itself - from the beginning worries to the written conclusions. As with all works of this kind, more women helped in its formulation than I can ever acknowledge.

Helga Jacobson
1977

(This paper was re-printed with the financial assistance of the Department of Secretary of State, Women's Programme.)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
INTRODUCTION	1
WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE AS AN APPROACH TO RESEARCH	2
HOW TO STUDY YOUR OWN COMMUNITY	7
REFERENCES	16
APPENDIX - SUGGESTED FRAMEWORK FOR ORGANIZING A STUDY	17

INTRODUCTION

The research approach which I will discuss and demonstrate in this paper focusses on women's experience in and out of society, as the starting point for description and understanding. The paper is divided into two sections. The first will show what is meant by "a woman's perspective" and the second will set out some of the procedures for carrying out a study from this perspective.

The aim of this paper is to provide the basis for understanding that more than one approach to research is valid. It will attempt to show that we do not necessarily need large scale survey research in order to present our view of and experience in the world. The approach I advocate and demonstrate starts from our understanding of the world as women, and how as women we know the world and what we know of it. I hope that this approach will create a basis for providing a more adequate description of women's lives and work - one that is spoken by women - an account that we ourselves provide.

I. Woman's Perspective As An Approach To Research

The focus of the approach defined and discussed here is our experience as women in this society. The research approach used here has as its point of departure that of "participant observation", with the emphasis placed on participation. This approach, long a tool of anthropologists, starts from the assumption that in order to understand what is happening in a society, a community or a social situation, one needs to participate in it. The aim is to interpret, to present for others' understanding, the situations one has seen, heard or acted in. I have used here the generalized "one" instead of a specific pronoun or ascription of a person that would clarify the sex of the person and which would also, therefore, more specifically include the speaker. Conventionally, research proceeds from the assumption that this is a proper, or legitimate, process - that speaking as or of "one" includes anyone who may be carrying out the research and participating in the study. While the approach which stresses participation is the point of departure, what I want to note here is that " one" is not all inclusive. In this convention the use of "one" is equivalent to the use of "he", and does not include the view of the situation as seen from the perspective of women, nor,if a woman is the actor in the situation, is her experience of it accounted for.

This comes about because the mode of operation in which we are trained to think and work has been defined and structured by men. Not surprisingly, therefore, the experience, rules for presenting the world and for understanding society, are given from a man's perspective. The generalized and/or objective mode of presenting research approaches, the findings or results of a study, take for granted that the focus and the authority is male, since this is the way the disciplines have been defined and rules of argument, presentation and conclusion have been made. The following quotation from a discussion of anthropological research shows this clearly:

> No investigator ever finds out 'everything'. What he ultimately learns is a very small fraction of the immense knowable whole. On numerous subjects every child in the place is better informed than he is when his research is concluded. (Hollander p.18)

"The investigator" and "he" are the same. In this article, in each case where the neutral "investigator" or "observer" are mentioned, the pronoun that immediately follows is "he". The focus and authority for descriptions are

spelled out for us in this unquestioned pronominal usage, and we, who are women, learn to think within this framework. "He" stands for us and we speak through "him". This is so much taken for granted that the question as to whose experience is described and who is the authority, or who has the right to speak and have the statement regarded as valid, is very rarely raised. I want to give one brief example of what happens when you raise the question. A book called The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman was one of the books that raised the question for me. As I began to think about the book it occurred to me to ask "whose reality" are they discussing? When I turned to the index it became clearer because under the heading "women", I found the following entry:

> Women, 168 (see also sexuality) as mothers (see children; Significant others).

Women are included as a category secondary to and dependent on that of men, whose actions, interests and intentions define the world that is being presented. Women's experience of the world is unrecognized and plays no part in discussion. The authors of the book do note at one point that men and women may inhabit different social worlds (p.168). They do not, however, at any point explore what this difference might mean, and therefore they do not define, except by default, whose social reality they are discussing. This is a typical pattern. Women are included or more accurately, subsumed, in the generalizations made from men's experience.

The first step we have to take then is to ask of all the material and information available to us, 'whose reality does it represent?' Where our reality as women is not fully included or recognized we must provide the information that will change the picture to include us. Only if we are specific about who we are and only if we focus on our lives, experience and/or view of society, will that version of the world appear.

A man's perspective, as it has been defined here, is a problem since how we are seeing the world and from whose position, remains undefined and unstated. We are always offered accounts of the world (by social scientists, politicians, doctors, etc) as if such accounts could be made without the inclusion of the person who gives them. To speak of a "man's perspective" rather than "a perspective" as such, is already a little unusual. What I am arguing here is that the person giving the account is always present in the framing of the account - in the way it is presented. It is possible to choose to ignore

the role that participation plays, or to use the generalized "one" or "we" to override the effects of identity of sex, but this does not alter the essential nature of the frame in which the account is set. The understanding has been created by someone, a person who has a distinct identity as man or woman. This identity influences both the work that is done and the way in which it is presented. When men are the presenters, there are built in assumptions that exclude women, or make women's roles invisible from the outset.

An example of this exclusion is the study of the small town of St. Pascal in Québec. It is a study of 'changing leadership and social organization in a Québec town' - the sub-title of the monograph. The study was carried out through participant observation; the author lived in the area. In using the study as an example, I want to show how its structure and assumptions exclude women. In talking about his entry into the community, the author makes the following statement:

> It was one of the neighbours who first involved me in the social relation between townsmen and the business community. (p.11)

We know from his name that the author is a man, but no descriptive statement would give us this information. So, in the context of describing social interaction or contacts within the community, his status as a male member is not made visible. It is clear from the aim and focus of the study that what is being presented is an account of the leadership of the community, which is male. If we treat this as a matter to be discussed rather than taken for granted, what would become visible would be the fact that the investigator was a man and, also, the relevance and importance of his status. Further, the assumption of authority and leadership roles by men, and excluding women by definition, would also become visible and a matter for discussion. Recognizing that it is a man's perspective from which we are viewing the community, not simply from "a perspective", makes it possible to see what is being left out.

It would cast the following statements in a different light, less as a dismissal and more legitimately as areas perhaps inappropriate for inclusion in this particular study:

> A family enterprise begins with the participation of the owner's wife as bookkeeper, clerk and manager. While authority within the business has not been consistently measured, in numerous cases women were powerful inside decision-makers, with an equal or dominant role in controlling the family firm.

> Business wives, however, do not represent the firm in public and they do not make business trips or belong to service clubs with other business women. Their participation in business affairs is added to their household responsibilities and to raising the children... (p.104)

From the Interview Sample:

> Sex All except two of the business persons are males. The two female managers are in business because of the death or illness of their husbands, and expressed little interest in business as an occupation. (p.205)

As these statments stand they clearly read as a dismissal. First, because women do not participate in the public or man's world, their work is seen as being inconsequent. What this fails to take into account is the considerable importance of the support system that women are providing for work in the public world (see also Smith, 1977). To provide support as bookkeeper, clerk, manager, housekeeper and child-raiser involves a great deal of work. It is this work that is essentially invisible from the man's perspective. A woman's perspective then would remedy this omission, and the combined picture would show how the business world actually operates from its public visible aspect to the domestic support system. Women's role in and contribution to society and community organization can only be made visible or recognized if the perspective from which social organization is seen, studied or presented is defined; a generalized "perspective" then might be seen as one which puts together a picture of our social world so that its members, male and female, are fully included.

The second statement is worth noting briefly again for the social situation it fails to recognize or account for. Women take on business responsibilities in addition to their other tasks and duties. They do not move by right in the business circle, but by default. There is no equivalent support system, social or domestic, for women in business. Lack of interest should therefore be understood in the context which creates it. Again, a perspective which included women would provide for a different understanding of women's situation in the community, household, and business sphere.

What this study shows is that women are excluded by the nature of the perspective from which the community is viewed and the assumptions that are built into the initial structuring of the study. Women's work in support of the business enterprise is recognized only to be passed over for more significant matters as the author, and indeed the community, may well define them. What is

absent then is any understanding or recognition that women's work is of consequence and that women have the right to speak of it in whatever terms they might perceive their enterprise. That women's roles are secondary is both an assumption and a practice, but this tells us only about the nature of the society and not about the work that women actually do or about the experience that is a part of doing it. Women are members of society and this recognition is what needs to be built into studies from the beginning.

The approach I am advocating here is that of small scale intensive research based on participant observation. Such accounts seek to present the world through the words and world views of their representatives. The technique limits the degree to which information can be generalized but does not decrease the validity of the account. When you focus on giving an account of your experience in and of the society as a woman, that view is valid as it stands. It may not represent all women, indeed it will not because all women are not alike, but it will represent many women who are like you in experience and place in the world. When you give an account that has as its focus your experience and the lives and work and experience of other women, be clear that this is what you are presenting. You do not speak for all women, or as a representative woman, but as yourself, for those women who have talked to you, and for those women who are known to you. In all cases state clearly the sources and boundaries of your information. That is who you talked to or who you are, how many women you talked to or are in contact with, how the project was started and supported, who worked on it, are the questions you need to answer. That sets the framework for understanding how the account came into existence.

In the convention of doing research we are trained to believe that the only valid way has to do with the gathering and presenting of statistical data - that this mode of representation is the only valid one. It is important to recognize that more than one kind of research is valid. What I am arguing here is that given our experience of the world, as women, we must start research from a place that relates to that experience. We need information from women, about women's lives and work, before we can adequately generate the framework that will allow us to carry out survey research that fully includes women.

II. How To Study Your Own Community

In this section, I am going to give you an outline of how you proceed with a study of your own community. It is an outline, or a series of guidelines, and must be treated as such. In this sense, it is yours to modify, change, add, and in other words, to make useable in your own situation and to your own aims. I am taking as an overall aim the provision of an account of women's living and working experience and the context in which that takes place.

To begin with, you need to locate yourself, so to speak, in time and space. A preliminary step is to begin a description of your living and working situation. Look around you, and begin by giving an account of what your world looks like. The kinds of things you can focus on are your house, where it is located, what kind of neighbourhood or area you are in, its physical and spacial characteristics, who you know in your neighbourhood or area, how scattered it is, how much contact there is between you and those who live around you, if you have friends there, relatives, how many people you know and how long you have lived there. Add anything that will make you visible and known to women who do not know you or your living circumstances - the situation in which you live. Note whatever strikes you as important, and do not dismiss as trivial or irrelevant anything that you feel is important to your account of your life. If there are several of you working together on a project, each of you can begin in this way, so that ultimately your combined task will be to put together your several descriptions to see what is shared and where there are differences. It is crucial for each woman to start in this way from where she herself is located, and to use this starting place to add to and increase the knowledge of her immediate local situation, her area, and finally the community in general. You will need to give an account of who is a part of your household, whether or not you have children - all of the details that make up your situation.

The following start to an account is given in Mary Chamberlain's book about the Fenwomen of England. It is an example of one way of beginning a description:

> I've always lived here - I was brought up in the house opposite and I've lived in this cottage for fifty-four years. And the houses - there was nearly fifty houses down this place, the Pits as they're called. There's about fourteen houses now, I think. They didn't have doorsteps some of them. Just hang

> the washing on the hedges up the road to dry. And we always used to have to get the water out of the well. And the earth toilets.....down the fen now there isn't nearly the amount of houses there used to be .....no one hardly ever left the village. And there was no outsiders in the village either. They was all married to someone in the village. You was afraid to talk of anyone because they was all relations. You couldn't get far that's why you kept together. But now, you go down the street and you don't know half of them..... (p.32)

As you write your description, include in it too everything that is satisfactory to you and anything that creates problems. Again, focus on what you think and feel about the place in which you live, how well what you need is provided for - what is missing. In this context as well, be clear that nothing is too trivial or too unimportant to mention, and that nothing is too grandiose to ask for at this point. When you have added up the total of what you see as being needed,you can always modify your requests, if not your hopes.

Another aspect of the beginning of an account is to include how you spend your time, what you do during the day and in the evening. Beginning with your own household, work out what tasks and responsibilities occupy your time. It is important to try to differentiate what you do - don't collapse everything under the heading of "housework" or "looking after children". Look carefully at the many tasks you undertake and that are often summarized under those general headings. This is an important part of your description, whether you work only in the home or outside as well. In either case, make sure you talk about how you organize your time, talk about what is easy and what is difficult, and what could be made easier by the availability of additional or different facilities.

As examples of the ways in which women describe their daily lives, here are extracts from three accounts given by Ann Oakley and recorded in her book Woman's Work: The Housewife Past and Present. These extracts will give you some idea of the way such accounts can be organized. The first two are by women who work in the home and the third by a woman who works outside the home as well.

> I wash up. Then I wash these two floors first. Then I dress him. Then I do the bedroom, the front room and the children's bedroom. Then I get on to the washing. I do the washing Monday and Friday: it takes about half an hour. I aim to finish by twelve, so I can meet Karen from school and she can come home and have some lunch. We have soup or scrambled eggs or something, and a dinner at night. I never sit down in the

morning; I never even have breakfast. I don't sit down till half past four when I watch Crossroads. In the afternoon I usually go shopping.....I know near enough everybody round here. I go with either the friend downstairs, or a friend up the road. Or I go to the clinic; in the summer we walk to Broadway and have dinner in Miller's department store."

(Oakley p.108)

It's difficult to describe my daily routine, because it varies according to when he's here and when he isn't. I get up as late as possible, which usually means about eight o'clock..... First I make her breakfast and I usually have something myself. Then I wash up and sort of potter around doing things. I endeavour to get the place straight - not cleaning really, just straightening it - tidying it. I come in and pick up everything and just run the thing over to pick up crumbs - you know the sort of thing....mostly the day consists of repetitive things like sorting out the baby's clothes, doing the washing. I try to do the washing every day, though I sometimes don't manage to..... I don't sit down in the morning. Sara has lunch about half past twelve. I don't always cook for her - just occasionally I do a casserole.....Usually I go out in the afternoons, I suppose two or three days a week to see people. I've made quite a few friends round here who have babies, and that's rather nice. (Oakley p. 116-117)

My husband gets up first. I get a cup of tea and toast in bed, then I get up. I get up with the aggro - the miseries, about ten to seven. I come downstairs like a mad bull and don't stop till I leave the house at twenty-five past eight. I try to do as much as I can before I go to work. I come down, lay the table for breakfast, get dressed, and then I charge around doing what I can: the children make their own beds. I make my bed. I carpet sweep; if I'm hoovering, I leave that till I come home. I dust, draw curtains, drink tea, smoke a million fags with nerves, and then I make sure the children are all dressed and ready for school....I come in, prepare my dinner - get the vegetables ready - then I do washing, ironing, have a cup of tea. I hand wash every day for about an hour..... (Oakley p.143-144)

As you work on this description, you will find that beginning in the household, you will naturally move outside to where and how you make contacts. You can see this development in two of the accounts given. Questions to focus on are - where you meet your friends, whether you meet with other women, or if this is a problem. Is it easy to get out to do your shopping? What kind of shops are there, and how good is the transport system? Are you handicapped by not having access to a car, by the weather, by the way the houses are built, the layout of the local area or community? Who designed your area, and for whom

was it designed? Tell whether there are meeting places for you and your friends, or places where you can make friends. If there are, what are they and how easy is it to get to them? Are there facilities for children to play and be minded while you do something else? Follow your own "rabbit tracks" as you go about your everyday life and see what it looks like. Work on the principle that everything you do is important! If there are several of you working on the project, compare notes and in this process, begin to add together what will become a more generalized picture. In this, focus on what you think of as typical. If you are talking to other women about their lives and work in order to put together a picture, putting together a picture of your own first is very important. As women we have been trained to take for granted what we do, and to not see " housework" as real work. The task of managing a household, therefore, becomes invisible and trivialized. In addition, as women, we are not taught to see our lives, our work, our thoughts, our feelings, as the authoritative place from which to begin. In making our own experience the starting place and focus of the discussion, we are creating a new approach to understanding the world. But this cannot be done without difficulty. We have to begin by listening to ourselves and to other women, without turning to an external, impersonal or male authority to make valid what we have to say. As you write note all the times you say "it seems", "I suppose", "we can assume", "I may be wrong but"...make your statements clearly your own by using the personal pronoun "I", not the editorial or generalizing "we". Make direct statements - not indirect. Finally, if you look seriously at what you do in your daily life, how that is for you, then it will give you a base from which you can talk to other women. In doing this you validate your own view of the world, recognize theirs, and begin to build a picture of what the world looks like from the perspective of women.

Changing to this perspective of talking without reference to or through the authorities is difficult as is illustrated by Mary Chamberlain's comment made at the beginning of her narration and discussion which presents the lives of women in the Fen Country of England. She says:

> ...Even their menfolk, they felt, had a more valid life than they. 'I can't tell you nothing' I was constantly being told, 'but if you ask my husband or old Dick so and so they can tell you far more'....
>
> The women have little confidence in their skill at storytelling. They see this as a man's perogative and are silent when their men are around, leaving the talking to the 'professionals'. Few people hear a woman's tale,

> remembering instead the old rustic character who entertained them so well around a pint, for pub going is not a woman's tradition. But gangs of women working on the land and mothers' stories to their children, provide as great a creative field for storytelling as the old boy in the pub...
>
> The woman's story must be told, but it must be seen in a perspective of its own.....while this book may not dispel their belief in romance as something existing beyond their own experience, I hope it will go some way towards giving women a sense of their own importance and relevance.
>
> (p.13)

Dorothy Smith, in an article defining clearly and specifically ways in which we are excluded from the tasks that make society visible and understood, summarizes the situation in this way:

> The institutionalized practices of excluding women from the ideological work of society is the reason we have a history constructed largely from the perspective of men, and largely about men.....
>
> In insisting that women appear as subjects in the formation of a social conciousness we represent ourselves. We cannot break, though we can be aware of, other enforced silences. And we can assert that there is not one way of seeing the world, not one way from which it may be known.
>
> (p.366)

The task then is to speak into and through the silences that have so far and in most areas stood for our lives as women, to make visible our experience in and out of the world, and to see that our tasks are a necessary and important part of the world of work.

Having begun by giving an account of your own everyday world and your experience in and of it, you can then broaden the boundaries and begin to describe your community as you know it. Write down what you know about the place you live in, in whatever way you have learned to know it. Focus on how you learned your way about the place, learned the transport system (if any), located schools, recreation activities, shopping centres, work places, how you got to meet people, how the locations of houses, schools, work places, service centres and so on are related to each other. How easy or difficult is it to get around? Always ask youself for whom was this place (home, office, school, etc.) designed - who does it work best for?

If you follow this you can begin to build up a picture of the way the community looks from your perspective. If there are several of you working on the project, you can work together on this aspect of the description. There will be then some areas for which you will need additional information. There are a variety of different sources for information. The telephone directory, for example, will give you general information about stores, businesses, schools, churches and, in general, a brief overall picture of the availability of public facilities. The Census of Canada, if you have access to it, may be able to provide you with general information about the number of people in the area, different ethnic groups, households and families, if you need this kind of information. A good general source for information about the situation of women is Women in the Labour Force, put out by the Women's Bureau, Labour Canada, Ottawa. This book and other material will be available at your nearest public library.

For areas that you cannot fill in, give your impressions - and state that is what you are doing. Provided that you are very clear about what you do not know, as well as what you do know, there is not a problem. The report or final account that you produce should always carefully document how you got your information, who you talked to, who provided you with help, any difficulties you encountered and any obstacles that were placed in your way. You can also list or state those areas where more information, or more readily accessible information, is needed. One important issue is that of confidentiality. This applies to the people in the community who talk to you about their lives and their views of what goes on.

It may be difficult to preserve absolute confidentiality, but where this is asked for and promised you must honour the commitment. In presenting information you can change the names of people, the places, such as schools and residential areas and households. You can also change dates or some sequences of events in personal accounts to make them less readily recognizable. Be clear in this that you are protecting individuals in the community, not institutions in the society. Where people in official positions refuse information or interviews or make derogatory statements, include the details of this in your description. You do not owe protection to institutions that may be justly criticized. Criticism of institutions can be made, indeed should be made, and set in the appropriate institutional framework. A part of your final account can be directed at changes needed at this level to make institutions more useful to women and more generally accessible.

If you are working, you can describe your work situation - conditions of work, how you found the job, whether or not other women are employed there, and whether it is an area where women traditionally work. If it is not traditional for women to work in your field, then an account of how it is to work there is very important. If this is information you are asking of other women, include their stories about their work situations. Since the lack of work outside the home for women is a widespread problem, report any information you can get about attempts women have made to find work in the community. You can ask employers, personnel managers or the owners or managers of small businesses for their policies or views on employing women. However, it is most important to ask women themselves for this kind of information. For information about how many women are employed in your community you may have to seek interviews from official sources, governments or business. Again, if you encounter difficulties, include an account of them in your report.

It is always important to note how many women are represented in the organizations that run your community, and in the public spheres in which you seek work and/or information. Note not only how many women are represented, but also whether or not issues concerning women are raised for discussion and the degree to which women's concerns are of interest in the management of local affairs. Support which is given should be documented and recognized, as well as any opposition and its sources.

For the work situation, another area to consider is that of unions. You can attempt to find out what policies there are that involve women working, and what practices facilitate or mitigate against improving the situation. Women's experience in working in relation to the union(s) are important to document in your account.

There are other areas that will be of concern. Health care is an important one. You may want to know and document how adequate facilities are for women's health problems, both physical and mental. What provisions there are for women's interests in this area, and what the views of medical practitioners are in the area on women's problems. You can begin by thinking about your own experience or stories you have heard from or about other women. It is important here to consider and make visible what is needed as well as what is available.

For married women, both those working at home and those working outside the home, the husband's conditions of work has a vital effect on the woman's life and organization. This should also be recognized and made part of your

account. For example, shift work has far-reaching effects on family life, and raises considerable problems for organization of a woman's work and recreational activities. The latter may indeed disappear in the organizational round. It is important here to be clear that it is women's problems that are to be focussed on. It is very easy to change the focus to one which looks at the difficulties men face in their daily living, working and family situations, but the point here is not to dismiss these problems, but rather to include them while maintaining the woman's perspective which is setting the framework for the account. In other words, make sure that you have stated the woman's perspective first and then go on to look at other problems, such as those of men and children, in their own perspective. There is no difficulty attached to seeing where problems are shared, but it is very easy to shift the viewpoint to the dominant one of the male without noticing. Finally, the special problems of single parent families, especially those headed by women, may need to be documented. Again, the direct personal accounting of the experience is the focus. What life is like in terms of everyday management and what particular problems have to be faced in working in and/or outside the home, must make up the account. In addition, if there are different ethnic groups in the area you may want to note this and give a brief impression of the problems posed in and around such groups. If possible include members of groups of different cultural backgrounds than yours so that they can speak of their lives and name their problems. Communities are divided in a variety of different ways and these differences need to be recognized, even if you can refer to them only briefly.

To sum up, presenting a picture is a complex and rather lengthy task. It is vital to remember that no study is ever complete. The aim is not to provide a complete account but to provide <u>an</u> account, to make a start. This beginning can always be expanded, or built upon, used by other women, or continued by yourself. It is only if we begin to make such starts - to create such beginnings - that our experience will be visible, understood, and a recognized part of information about our society.

Lastly, a note about the finished product. There is no fixed formula for the way this should appear. One way of presenting the account is to tell it as if you were telling a story, making the account as clear to the listeners as possible. Another way is to look at the account or accounts and to make a summary of the overall characteristics, and to give quotes from the original text as examples, in the way I have used quotes in this paper. In telling the story or in summarizing the account, there are two important points to remember.

First, provide headings[1] that set a framework to guide you and your readers/ listeners through the journey you are taking together. A framework is essential because without it, it is hard for those on the outside to get their bearings. Second, where you edit or summarize, state clearly what your focus is. In all work of this kind we choose to include some incidents and information, and to exclude others. State the reason why you chose the passages you chose to make a case - always be clear as to your aims in presenting the account.

In conclusion, I would like to say how important it is that we have these accounts - that we work in this way. There are very few accounts of women's lives, work and experience in British Columbia or in Canada in general. Where changes are being considered or needed, for example, Northern Development in British Columbia[2], we need to make clear and visible what the needs of women are. We can do this most effectively by showing the work that women do, the kind of lives we lead, and the problems we face as women in our society. To make this clear it is women's voices, our voices, that must be heard. We must raise our voices to speak of the world as we know and experience it - we must call attention not only to our perspective in this way but also to our problems and needs in this society.

---

1. Outline of heading and topics is attached in appendix.

2. See the Northern Women's Task Force on Single Industry Resource Communities.

REFERENCES

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckman. The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge. Anchor Books, 1977

Chamberlain, Mary. Fenwomen: A Portrait of Women in an English Village. Virago Limited, 1975

Gold, Gerald L. St. Pascal: Changing Leadership and Social Organization in a Québec Town. Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1975

Hollander, A.N.J. den. "Social Description: The Problem of Reliability and Validity". Anthropologists in the Field edited by D.G. Jongmans and P.C.W. Gutkind, 1967

Labour Canada, Women's Bureau. Women in the Labour Force: Facts and Figures, 1975

Oakley, Ann. Woman's Work: The Housewife Past and Present. Vintage Books, 1974

Smith, Dorothy. "Ideological Structures and How Women are Excluded". The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology 12(4), 1975

Smith, Dorothy. "Women, the Family and Corporate Capitalism". Women in Canada (revised edition) edited by Marylee Stephenson, 1977

Northern B.C. Women's Task Force Report on Single Industry Resource Communities Women's Research Centre, Vancouver, B.C., 1977

APPENDIX

The following outline is a suggested framework for organizing a study. It provides an outline of questions you might focus on and the kind of areas to cover. In setting up a study you can develop this kind of framework for yourself, in the context of interviewing or recording your own perspective - use such outlines and lists as a guide.

1. How The Study Was Carried Out

Report here all aspects of organizing the work that was done - who was responsible, how the information was collected, where and from whom it was collected, what their backgrounds were and how they were contacted. If it is your own account, say who you are and what you are attempting to show through your presentation. Make certain that readers/listeners know the intent of your account.

2. The Community

Describe the location of the community and your own location within it. You can use a map and/or draw your own map showing how the world you live in looks to you. Such maps are useful because they can help to provide a basis for following through on what you do and where you go in a day, and are sometimes an easy way to get other women to focus on the same thing. You can also show through such maps how the world looks to different women in the community.

In describing the community, note the different kinds of houses and housing, note and describe the differences in residential areas, and show those differences. Note the location of the different groups of people in the community, e.g. workers and management, ethnic groups, and so on. Whatever your background, start from there and work outwards.

Is there a centre to your community? Where are the public facilities - schools,shopping centre, churches, meeting halls, government offices, women's centre, medical and health facilities, recreation facilities? Note if there are any needed facilities missing in your community. How do you get around in the area?

3. Life In The Community: Women's Worlds And Work

Think about your household - who lives in it and how it is organized. What is your daily schedule? How does your schedule compare to that of other women in the community? Are you isolated or do you have friends? Does anyone help you with your daily tasks? What tasks do you enjoy - dislike? Describe your house and how you move around in it. This is also a useful way to start other women telling you about their lives or recording the pattern of their own lives.

Your account (or the account you get) should include discussions of: the transport system; children at school, home and play, child care, children's friends; how the area is designed, sidewalks, gardens, play areas; the location of shopping and other public facilities; the location of the work place and how that effects daily life and contact patterns within and outside the house; the general relation between household contact patterns.

In relation to all these features of daily life, look at what works for you and what does not, what is present and what is missing that would make life easier, e.g. a good transport system, childcare, different work organizations.

You might wish to talk about household budgeting. You might want to note how the money is handled, by whom, what kind of control and resources you (and other women) have. Do you have an allowance, your own salary, savings (how did you save), your own bank account, a joint bank account? Who pays the bills in your house - the rent, mortgage, food, clothes, children's clothes? Who pays for recreation, trips, holidays, visiting friends and relatives outside your community?

4. Community Power Structure

Is there a town council or local council in your area? What kind of problems does it deal with - who serves on it and how are they chosen? Note if there are any women involved on the Council and if women's problems or issues that specifically concern women are considered. How can more women be involved in this process? Is there a local newspaper - what does it represent, who does it speak for, what does it deal with, how does it reflect on or speak about women.

5. The Local Industry (Industries)

How does the work situation look to you - are you directly or indirectly involved? Who works there, how does the organization of work effect the community, the household - the family? Make women the focus of your discussion and work from there to looking at the world and its organization and problems.

What is the employment situation - what is available for women in both traditional and non-traditional work? In general, what's the employment situation and is anything being done to find more jobs for women - any talk of introducing more industrial development? Are women and women's needs included in the discussions - if not, how can you work for this recognition and inclusion?

If woman are applying for jobs and regularly do not find them, see if you can document this with some examples. Always ask the management what their policies are with regard to employing women.

From what you know of the way things work, report how the industry is structured, how decisions are made, who is represented and whose concerns are central, the relation between industrial interest and the community interests. How much does community power structure and the industry overlap, i.e. who serves in both positions, and how many men do.

What is the union situation? Who does the union represent and who does it serve? Has the union any policies relating to women?

6. Work In The Community

In general here look at the availability of work - what kind, what range, and what the overall resources for employing women are. What could be done to improve the situation?

7. Healthcare Facilities

What is available and what is missing? How are women treated by local doctors, hospitals, counsellors, etc. Where are these people located? How easy is it to get treatment for yourself - for the children? What are the problems with healthcare, both physical and mental? What problems do women most frequently face in these areas? Where can you get help and advice?

8. Meeting Places

Is it easy or difficult to get to know other women in the community? How are social contacts organized - what meeting places are there, and what kind of occasions are there for meeting? Are there places to meet and drink coffee and chat, to eat out? Would it help if there were such places? What is needed in the area to facilitate social contact, interaction and communication? Are you, or are other women, isolated in the area? What does the isolation look like? Try to describe your feeling and the location as clearly as you can. What are the consequences of isolation?

9. Conclusion

In this section summarize what you have learned about women's lives and work in the community. Talk about what you think is typical, atypical. Discuss what other information is needed and how we might get it. Note how the community provides for women, what is needed and what is missing. Make recommendations as to how you think specific needs can be met.

You can use your recommendations to focus on a "brief" which you can present to the authorities, local and elsewhere, making visible your work and your needs in the community. A "brief" simply focusses the argument specifically on recommedations for changes and provides the supporting evidence (as far as possilbe) for the necessity of the change. A brief and your report can go together or they can be structured (and presented) separately.

****